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THE

# POWERS OF THE AIR

BY

STURGE  
MOORE



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# THE POWERS OF THE AIR

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POETRY

1899. THE VINEDRESSER AND OTHER POEMS

1901. APHRODITE AGAINST ARTEMIS

1903. ABSALOM

1903. DANÆ

1905. THE LITTLE SCHOOL

1906. POEMS

1911. MARIAMNE

1911. A SICILIAN IDYLL

1914. THE SEA IS KIND

PROSE

1899. THE CENTAUR AND THE BACCHANT, FROM  
THE FRENCH BY MAURICE DE GUERIN

1900. ALTDORFER

1904. DURER

1906. CORREGGIO

1910. ART AND LIFE (FLAUBERT AND BLAKE)

1915. HARK TO THESE THREE

1919. SOME SOLDIER POETS



# THE POWERS OF THE AIR

BY

**T. STURGE  
MOORE**

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TO ROBERT CALVERLEY AND ELIZABETH  
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# THE POWERS OF THE AIR

## I

My father sailed the sea, saw Egypt's tombs  
Like polished hills high as Acropolis,  
An hundred miles inland, yet reached by ships :  
Saw Caucasus, whose coping of pure snow  
Supports the delicate tent of azure air  
That stretches thence above the highest cloud.  
But I had feared a life adventureless  
Was buckled to my crooked spine—had feared  
Never to have the wherewithal to whet  
That second appetite of feasted friends  
Which craves for tales of straits and jeopardies  
That garnished those near faces with odd smiles :  
Yet lo ! I write to recount things heard, seen,  
In which I even took a trifling part :  
And witness the more fully what occurred  
Because the actors noticed me no more  
Than their own shadows.

Not another word !

Till I have thanked Aristocles, broad-chested,  
Apollo-headed,—generous, gentle soul,  
Who has spared hours from a life, divine  
With health and wealth and fine capacity  
For thought and feeling, seconding my blunt  
Unlikely stilus, till what follows here  
Is now more worth my theme than I dared hope.  
O noble man ! my heart, though much enlarged,  
Endures for thy sake silence, after this ;  
For iterance spoils thanks, though more be due  
Than Hellas owes to Helios, fruits and flowers.

Few ever think what great toil is involved  
Spreading the tacky pigment on a wall ;

What nicety applying heat with irons  
To flush the wax, yet so that it run not.  
When every figure's outline is fulfilled  
With browns and varied pallors mocking flesh ;  
Then must each be enisled by the ground tint  
As vivid green creek, foil to a shoal of swimmers,  
Shows up their clear-cut vigour on its depth.  
Parrhasios, king of painters, heaves a sigh  
When he sinks back upon a couch to rest  
And ponder the effect of what is done.  
It soothes him then if I begin to read  
From Pindar, Sappho, or Anacreon.  
He first was brought to Athens on the ship  
Whose captain was my father—open-souled,  
Heard of my plight and eased its weight at once—  
Found in his own this function for my life,  
To study precious scrolls the while he worked ;  
Then, when his eye from effort sank bemused,  
To read aloud what silence had prepared  
Lest the tongue stumble or obscure the sense  
Through ill-foreseeing all the poet's drift.  
Thus I, a voice withdrawn from sight, attend  
Upon the outskirts of his fecund hours ;  
For that is pain for him which in the street  
Stirs callous mirth. I keep behind him, flit  
From screen to screen, to cross his field of view ;  
His glance avoids the encounter with like care.  
On guard against the give and take of speech  
We both are, for direct exchange would bring  
The image of my impotence to mind,  
Which cannot hinder when a poet's words  
With eagle beauty carry off the soul.  
And thus our lives are fellows, though we talk  
More rarely than cold neighbours ; yet to others  
I hear him, lavish with encouragement,

Even avert that my voice trains itself  
As athlete does a well-proportioned frame ;  
His phrase ran that at last it might become  
“ Agile and sensitive with seemly grace.”

A full heart's tip-toe impulse has so far  
Moved me as my two benefactors soar,  
Poet and painter on broad-pinioned rhythm.  
Now, gratitude expressed, I fade and am  
A longer-remembered echo, a mere voice  
Repeating others' words, describing scenes  
As sheltered pool shows solemn poplar stems  
How Zephyr sways their tops against the blue.



## II

Three months ago I hurried at daybreak through the still deserted streets to Andokides' shop; for he had not sent a certain oinochoe, the present Parrhasios intended for Dione that afternoon. The potter was already abroad, but there, behind the palisade gates of his shop, I could see the chosen flagon. Dolon, his foreman, dared not break the seal on the lock and open the show-room; besides, the vase was still empty, for it was to his partner's that Andokides was gone to fetch the sacred oil. Though the streets were filling with the holiday crowd I determined to wait, and so prevent all risk of my benefactor's disappointment. The fellow, slightly chagrined that I disregarded his promise to bring the vase on his master's return, went back to pound clay in the yard. I could see him stooping over the bin whenever I looked up from reading Bacchylides. Presently two other hands, the one as dwarfish as his companion was hulking, entered by a back way, and this latter shouted: "Aristophanes would give a great price for Smikros, if you want to turn slave-dealer," and he pushed the stumpy tousle-headed lad forward, "He struts like any Alcibiades. He feels like Pericles though he looks like a rat."

"Bite!" cried the little man; and leaping up crammed a carrot into the broad smile above him.

While Dolon laughed at them, the vast lout shook with exaggerated appreciation of his own predicament. When he had freed his jaws, he spluttered: "Do that just so on the stage and the audience will keep the next joke waiting."

But your ear for what I was on the point of telling you, your ear for that!" and he flung his interrupter staggering across the court.

"Larks before sunrise, ahead of the crowd," he went on, "we've been to see Parrhasios' new picture, 'The Powers of the Air.' Smikros plants that big littleness of his before the panel and cries out: 'Magnificent! Look, Orithyia's eye is like a rabbit's when it feels a hand close over its ears! Her mouth opens; there's a bubble in her throat! What a contrast to Iris; she escapes as feately as a wrestler! Ha, old Satyros, down you go in the mud! And he counted so on her suckling a bob-tailed brat. The trick was all but done! Wasn't it, old Goat?'—and all this like no end of a sophist surrounded by neatly sandalled boys; for every slave had stopped work to listen."

Though I heard these phrases only at second-hand, the heavy lout recalled them with such relish that fundamental excellences of my dear master's invention, like flames from stirred logs, flashed up, having become flaked over by the insistence of his friends and admirers on the sweep of his line, the distinction of his types, and the fine proportions of his figures. Besides, this panel had hung in the great workroom so long that my mind no longer saw what my eyes looked at, and the boy-draughtsman's references to the crudities of life brought its dramatic force and human wealth over me as never before. Not that he was blind to other qualities, for Gryllus continued with exaggerated mimicry:

"'What a blue Hera's cloak is, powdered lapis! Her chiton towers like a white cloud at



noon. There's an arm to spank boys with ! Gossips need not pity her though she bore twins yearly ! An excellent stroke that, to make Boreas' white locks curve like the edges of a thunderstorm against his black cloak ; but with such a rush she should already be on his shoulder and float out behind him in her forget-me-not smock,' and he began daubing the air like Phœbus painting out Chaos and old Nyx. And all this because some of his ratship's pots have been bought in preference to the boss's. Was ever pygmy so huge in his own conceit ! ”

The little fellow, who had returned to dance all round the big Gryllus with a second carrot, at last, like a mountain cat, was on his shoulders, from which vantage he brought the report to an end ; but soon found himself shaken off into the wet clay, and a big shutter on which they knead it up into loaves clapped over the bin like a lid and sat on, while Dolon roared with laughter. The sounds from inside were by no means so merry. They let Smikros out. He stumped across to the trough to clean himself and rinse his shirt. The fun was spoiled, but the others were too awkward not to continue.

“ That's all there is of him,” jeered Gryllus ; “ if it were not so bristly 'twould be a toad, and a spike or two more would make an hedgehog. I thought my eyes were mad when he seized a mop from a slave and flew straight for a pail of colour and begins slapping me his great swinging strokes across the floor. The dumbfounded slaves scratched their heads and grunted. I pulled at Smikros to bring him to his senses. Not a bit of use. He was still scrabbling when in came

Parrhasios. His myrmidons impeach our midget. The Zeus of limners thunders: 'Turn him out! Wash up this mess!' Buckets of water and mops hurry forward, but dauntless, our Prometheus cries with his cracked voice, 'Look, Parrhasios, would not your Orithyia swim in better as I have sketched her? Look, and I will help clean the floor myself!' The highly-groomed father of paints and brushes . . ." but here Andokides returned.

### III

Again Parrhasios' workroom was open to sight-seers. A rope stretched from end to end prevented their coming within several yards of the panels ranged against the west wall. The one intended for the dining-hall of Cephalos showed Boreas carrying off Orithyia to the right, in the centre Hera, and on the left Iris escaping from a satyr ; the other, destined to adorn the loggia of Kallias, first showed Eos pitying Tithonus, then Phœbus, from whose outstretched arms fell on the one side Phaëthon, on the other Icarus ; to the left again, Cynthia admired the sleeping Endymion. The great Sardinian carpets, by which light from the portico can be shut out, were folded and tied back against either wall ; beyond its pillars the sundrenched awning slanted out half across the court. I could just see the basin in its centre flash beyond the edge of the sailcloth. The plain walls towering up to the painted rafters, white with vermilion rulings, dwarfed and solemnized the groups of chattering townsfolk clustered along the barrier. To give the air movement the high shutters at the north end were all open, and in the balcony just under them I sat, as I often do when Parrhasios is at work, so that when he exclaims " more light " or " less " I can open or close them. Few of those staring up at the panels noticed my presence, and it was as much a holiday for me to watch and listen to them, as it was for them to see the pictures. I had left both scrolls and writing materials in their chest for this morning ; but as noon drew on the voices hushed, till the whispering of dusty feet became

the dominant sound, and I fell a-dreaming, while my eyes wandered from the room along the Sacred Way cleaving the olive-yards to the north-west, and at last rested on the pale amethyst curtain of Cithæron which divides the skies of Attica from those of Bœotia. Before Eleusis the intensely blue loop of its bay set off the faint hues of the broiling land, and I saw the "invisible messengers, swift without wings," passing between the "ethereal halls" and the "green curtained porches of Poseidon's palace" as I crooned to myself :

"Ribbioned Iris a-stream and Hermes with pinioned shoon !

Through the twilight of dawn and of eve, through the brilliance of noon,

Unwearied by distance, unoppressed by the tyrannous glare,

Their hearts braced strong as the azure, their limbs like the salt sea air.

Their life is the thought that they carry, from the mind of a god to a god

When the deep sea counsels Olympus . . ."

Suddenly a strident voice cried in the room beneath me : " That's my figure ! Don't pretend you've forgot ; I sketched it on these flags and you've bagged it." When my eyes became reaccustomed to the comparative darkness of the room, I saw that the dwarfish potter, Smikros, had slipped inside the rope and was approaching a group nearer the pictures, Parrhasios, Aristocles, Dione, and Kallias. The master, who advanced between his friends and the vase painter, had evidently brought them to see the panels, taking advantage of the lull and quiet of noon. Dione



uttered a little scream as I turned, and, gliding forward, tried to draw the master away from the waspish vehemence which seemed about to attack him. Two slaves hurried up and seized Smikros by the arms. Now, as my eyes began to forget the glare outside, I could see how Parrhasios' head, neck, shoulders and bare arm had flushed deeply. His black beard was scrupulously trimmed, and on his glossy embalmed locks he wore the silver-gilt crown of taper swallows' wings, the emblem of his acknowledged sovereignty among painters; since with feathers from the wing tips of this bird he traces those rapid and subtle outlines for which he is above all renowned. His himation was deep green, but that of Aristocles, who, golden and powerful as Phœbus, had both arms and shoulders bare, was white. The lady was wound and draped in blue and violet veils, and her lively arms twinkled with bracelets, while her hair in coral-coloured bands was very artfully disposed. The three were as beautiful as a picture, and Kallias looked as though he intended to buy it. With hesitation the usually fluent master answered his antagonist :

" I scarcely remember if I saw the mess on the floor. But the notion that the group might be rehandled certainly dates from the incident to which you refer. You think me your debtor? Well, I am ready; at what do you assess your claim? " Smikros, who was still wriggling between his captors, seemed scarcely to understand, and Aristocles interposed. " Parrhasios, you wrong your art in admitting any claim. We all know that pictured figures closely resemble one another in attitude. Who can think of your

Hera apart from that of Mikon, or of his without remembering Polygnotus? Yet no one confuses for that reason the diverse excellences of the three masterpieces. Not so much as a thousandth part of the admiration we owe your Orithyia can be due to the scrawl this lad produced in the time and manner of which you spoke to me."

"My dear," replied Parrhasios, "he believes that he has helped me; it is with that belief and not with the actual facts that I am concerned. What will content you?" he asked the struggler.

"Write under the group," the undaunted dwarf replied, "'The attitude of this figure was given to Parrhasios by Smikros, the painter of vases.'"

"You are certain that your figure resembled mine?" smiled the master.

"In the main it did."

"Well then I . . ."

"But, Parrhasios," Aristocles interposed again, "this is madness! Allow me to prevent the utterance of words which you are bound to regret. You have just given us most excellent reasons for breaking with the custom of adding names to identify the figures in your pictures. Let my purse save your masterpiece. Turn him out and toss this after him," he ordered the slaves. Parrhasios made a movement as though he would arrest them, but Dione clung to his arm and Aristocles was obeyed. "It is impious to imagine that the gods bestow any important gift at random," he continued. "How could the circumstances and breeding that have resulted in such an oaf be chosen for the nice unfolding of a lofty invention? The bare suggestion reproaches Zeus. The illiberal lives of artisans and sailors

are no soil for such flowers. You yourself doubted whether the figure he daubed on these flags bore any resemblance to that in your panel. How could his coarse senses and untrained intellect descry what was and what was not like your creation? Besides, his memory is more than a month old. We see how the most carefully reared citizens dispute over the likeness that Pheidias has left us of Pericles. Of what grotesque misconceptions that hairy monster must then be capable!"

Parrhasios was once more fully himself. "Your generous friendship has my heart's warmest thanks. I truly believe that my figure owes but little to our lusty claimant, yet I regret that even the meanest of my subjects should think me less than kingly, which prompts me. . . ."

"Banish the thought," cried the imperious Aristocles, "we who best appreciate it are now convinced that your magnanimity is not bounded even by reason."

"I wear this crown because Zeuxis confessed my supremacy, acknowledging his candour with my own. What I took from this Smikros was a seed; sown in other minds it might have died, but in mine it grew: shall I refuse this small satisfaction to one whose thought I have made my own?"

"Do nothing rashly; the gods wink flashes through the mind; sometimes they synchronise accidentally with grotesque circumstances, but this should not detract from their divine origin." Dione arrested the vehemence of the poet by shaking her bangles like silver bells, and Parrhasios remonstrated, "My dear, my dear, seek

not to balk a resolution that fills me with content." Then the lady chimed in with a new music, "My Parrhasios is luxurious in this as in everything. Whatever he handles must be choice ; so too in his mind nothing cloudy, cross-grained or derogatory to the dream of his life is permitted to lodge."

"Ionian softness !" muttered Aristocles. Then Kallias smilingly interfered. "Your severity is Lacedaemonian," he said to the young man ; "the Periclean moderation lies between taking advantage of every snowfall to spend the night in the open, and sheltering mind and body from the least rude or sordid contact."

"Dear Aristocles," cried Parrhasios, "am I despised in the heart that for nearly six months has seemed open to me as the house of a brother ? " The poet embraced and kissed the painter, then laughed. "What do I know of how Zeus scatters happy thoughts over the human crowd ? Is the nautilus wiser, soft-bodied in its pearl-coated shell, or the crab whose skin is as hard as the other's house ? "

"This skin, though as brown, will never be as hard as the crab's," cried the master, admiring the muscular symmetry of his young friend's arms which he still held by the hands. "Pardon me," the other rejoined, "but I spent yesterday walking under this broiling sun with Socrates, whose single valour nearly retrieved the disaster at Delium. He wanted to persuade me that poetry was employment unworthy of a noble mind, which should be solely and only dedicated to truth. He still trains his body as rigorously as I have done, but is even more stringent with



his mind, and yet is as pious as our grandfathers were. He reproached me with the 'Ionian softness' of my scepticism and enthusiasm. I was nettled, and dared not complain of the sun and dust which he seemed scarcely to notice. Such, most gifted Ephesian, is the true cause of my irritability, that even a night's sleep has not eradicated."

"Avoid that Socrates, dear," smiled the master.

"No, no, I am going to Ægina for three weeks, but then I must have another tussle with my snub-nosed discomforter, and I think I might more easily have the better of him here with you and Dione to see fair play. . . . But my brother will be waiting if I do not hurry! This incident of the slave's claim would make a good ram's head to shake the walls of Socrates' antique assurance in providence."

"I should leave his walls unbattered, and rely on distance and policy for preventing any renewed attack," laughed Parrhasios.

"Be sure he speaks wisdom," chimed in Dione. But the swarthy young man laughed through the golden velvet of an infant beard. "No, no, tomorrow three weeks I will bring him here and send for this Smikros. Socrates shall be judge: you shall plead for the slave while I will speak in your defence. So, till then, leave the picture uninscribed. Farewell! Adieu, Dione—Kallias, adieu."

## IV

Socrates stood a full head shorter than Aristocles. Fifty to fifty-six years of age, his demeanour was not unworthy of his company, though his feet were bare, his chiton unbleached, his cloak coarse and scanty: Alert eyes gleamed from a placid face in no sense small-featured. The resemblance to a satyr is due entirely to the shapeless nose. Life-worthiness is the total impression, and athletes admire his toughness as shipwrights that of my father's "Dolphin," proved in so many voyages. The sun was doubly excluded from the lofty workroom by the awning in the court and the Sardinian carpets which shut off the portico. The poet wore a hazy blue himation over white; Dione, creamy yellow, figured boldly with the curving stems, dart-headed leaves and blue and pink flowers of the convolvulus. Her kerchief snood was pink, with black spots in series of four or five together like the stops of a flute. While the young man was giving Parrhasios and Dione news from Ægina the philosopher stood as much alone as a shepherd in a wide plain, and gazed at the panel entitled 'The Powers of the Air.' At last he glanced up through the open northern shutters above my head, with eyes that seemed to see the moon behind the blue. Later on I found that wide horizons and vast distances were always brought to mind by his repose, as though walls and the city had given place to them. When Aristocles moved, Socrates' eyes dropped to meet his with a smile of real welcome, and thenceforward he seemed to be the host and the others his guests; and turning with mischievous

urbanity to Dione, while indicating the group of Boreas and Orithyia, he asked, "Dear lady, did Parrhasios woo like that?" Dione laughed. "You know the answer or you would not ask"; and he continued, "The sculptor who carved the old idol of Poseidon at Piræus may have wooed like that, but why should we whose manners and art have so improved represent a god so barbarously?"

"I conceived it with Aristocles' fine dithyramb in my head," said the master, "which I think expresses very well what is still divine in those old stories."

"Let us hear, Aristocles," and the philosopher's smile faded out as, like a sentinel patiently entering on a long night watch, he leant heavily on his staff, while the young man recited:

"The spring and the child were tender and gay  
When out of the north he rushed,  
Immensely swift, irresistibly strong,  
And cloaked in passionate black.

"My hair is white,  
Delights are stale,  
My youth has flown like a dream:  
But the love of this delicate girl  
Will replenish my heart till my joys rebud  
If I give her a kiss," thought he.

Bronzed arms have clipped her skyey robes  
An anemone flush flickered out  
On the cheek which shrank from his old chapped  
lips.

As he tore her root from the earth:

"Mine, mine," he cried,

"How light she is !  
The north shall rival the south  
When she sits in the porch of my cave.  
She shall fill my heart till its age shall bloom  
As flagrantly as her youth."

Exiled, she paled to a shade of herself,—  
The north's wan hint of the south !  
Her sons were savage and turbulent storms ;  
They whirled her memory's plaints  
Like flakes of snow  
Around the god's  
Deject and spiritless head.

"My strength and my will were vain ;  
For a tentative grace and tact," he moaned  
"Are the secret of warmth and youth."

"But this condemns the god instead of praising him," cried Socrates. "This is your scepticism," he laughed, "that believes there is nothing divine about the gods, and merely plays with the story."

"In my judgment," Parrhasios interposed, "this energy, this pathos and the glimpses of vision are sufficient excuse for poem or picture, and turn the myth to very good account," and Dione added: "The suggestion that our sex becomes more or less beautiful according to the way in which it is wooed and won gratifies me," and the master flattered her shoulder with a proud approving hand.

"My first thought is almost always condemned, no matter what the theme or who the judges," said the philosopher, "but I like to understand where my mistake lies, so with your kind permission I will enquire it out. Aristocles, does not action teach and school desire ? "



"Surely, Socrates, it is rather desire which prompts and leads to action!"

"Ah, I am wrong. Yet a child wants the moon, a boy wants to over-eat, a young man fitfully desires a thousand different things every day." The poet nodded. "We wean the child with toys it can handle from the lure of the intangible, we cram the boy's day as full as possible so as to leave only a reasonable time for eating, we get the young man to train seriously and study in view of some one prize so as to focus his desires." Another nod of assent. "Then we discipline all these desires with activities; and Parrhasios, has not painting taught you to distinguish what can be painted from what it were vain to attempt?"

"You are quite right, Socrates, it is doing a thing which schools and limits desire; and it is only a master painter who knows where to stop short." Socrates pretended to pound the floor with his staff as though he were applauding his thought in the theatre, then with roguish glee he turned quickly on Aristocles. "Have not the gods been active for ages? Then must not their desires be perfectly schooled and concentrated on aims which are accomplished?" Aristocles was delighted with the argument. "You must teach me this skill," he said, offering the philosopher both his hands; but the staff had to be leant against one of the couches before they could be accepted.

"Ah! my Plato, my whole skill is nothing but the dread of taking a counterfeit for truth, as poets and artists are only too ready to do."

"You called me Plato three weeks ago," the young man said, "but I cannot guess why."

"Width of brow and breadth of pectoral deserve the name ; they are rarely found together in such splendour," the other answered.

The painter endorsed this appreciation with a glance first at that powerful frame, then at its appraiser, and then, caressing his beard, resumed : "But seriously, Socrates, you cannot pretend that the divinity of Boreas is self-evident in the myth."

"Such tales were first told ages since, and perhaps there has been no more scruple over adding to them than our Plato has shown. If I cared to amuse my contemporaries with yet another allegory, I could clinch my argument by remarking that Boreas' energies are now harnessed to the one function which he performs unexceptionably, rushing from the Hyperborean regions with cold air and clouds heavy with rain over lands enervated with heat and dust-storms. If ever he lapsed from this divine and rational activity by ravishing girls, he has doubtless long learnt that only in this one way can he obtain the full satisfaction of success, and would no more dream of attempting to carry off Dione, than you when training for a two-mile race would waste time trying to fly like Icarus. Being a man you recognise that it is no use competing with birds ; being a god, he has discovered the folly of behaving like an ill-bred fellow."

With the master seated near her feet Dione now lay along one couch with head propped on her hands, so as to gaze over its end at Aristocles, who had drawn the philosopher on to the other. A silence ensued, rendered musical by the cooing of doves. I have often noticed that the emptiness

of the workroom with its bare warm-grey walls and tawny marble floor seems to foster those fitful taciturnities that are apt to fleck conversations before the encountering minds have warmed through. The pictures had been pored on hitherto, but now more than one pair of eyes wandered uneasily. Unlike Zeuxis, the master has everything put away as soon as it has served ; so there are no trailing piles of gorgeous raiment, no paintings save the one or two he intends to show, no more couches even than the number of his guests require. Thus the infant silence seemed to find an elder sister on the polished flags and expanse of wall to re-enforce its own strength. Soon, like sea-birds on a floating spar, every gaze sought refuge in the "Trireme," a triple table, one shelf eighteen inches beneath another. It runs easily on silver-socketed wheels so that with a push or pull the master can keep it handy ; on it are scrupulously ranged the materials of his art—jars of powdered earths and stones, gums, wax, naphthas and other vehicles in flasks, the brazier and irons which cause the wax to suffuse the surface of the colour with its polished flush, boxes of various feathers which he splices to reed and cane in fabricating pencils to his need, chalks and charred vine-twigs for essaying outlines, compasses, squares, rulers, plummets, knives. In front of the gaily painted wooden framework a mimic prow advances on which runs a silver victory, a present that Kresilas the old sculptor made the master on the occasion of his success many years before in representing the Athenian Demos. No ship's captain is more meticulous for order and cleanliness than the master ; so

there is constant rivalry among the slaves, and the vessel is entrusted to whoever proves himself most thorough and attentive at his work. This engaging piece of furniture seemed to relieve an oppression that had scarcely lasted long enough to be felt, when Aristocles resumed the lapsed thought thus. "Man is the only animal who can laugh, think and speak ; so I suppose you believe he is destined at last to devote himself entirely to those three activities, even as the swift seems almost to have attained a divine concentration on flight. While I was at Ægina my father, whose wound has reduced him to passing day and night on a couch in the portico, told me how these birds, unlike the swallows who collect about the eaves and go noisily to bed, continue their swooping evolutions as the light fades, mounting higher and higher ; long after sunset they can be discerned passing across the moon, and in the dawn he had seen them returning from an immense height, always indefatigably glancing to and fro."

"How lovely," cried Dione, "if at night our thoughts could only climb to ethereal altitudes and remain suspended there till morning recalls them to the earth."

"My dreams occasionally know a like felicity," said Parrhasios.

"Dreams in deified humanity would give place to logic, song to dialectic, and love to laughter, would they not, Socrates ? " quizzed the young man, "and now I come to think of it," he went on, "I have described your life ; for though you trained like an athlete, and fought like a soldier, and have reduced your creature wants to a minimum, you undertook all these rigours not for



their own sake but because through them you could win freedom from the chisel to which your father had apprenticed you, in order to spend the greater portion of your days thinking, talking and laughing." The philosopher shook with inward mirth at Aristocles' sally, and retorted: "Had I become expert with the chisel like Pheidias, envy might have cast me in prison and charged me with peculation as it did him; but ambitious persons see that I prefer the company of men too young to be their rivals, and often hearing us laughing, think that I waste my time and are content. Anxieties must have deprived Pheidias of many a good laugh. Parrhasios, Parrhasios, since you wear that crown, have you not found that laughter and ease are deserting you?"

"Look at those words added to his picture since I was last here," cried Aristocles, "'Smikros, the painter of vases, gave Parrhasios the attitude of the female figure in this group.' He believes letters to be discordant with the flowing forms of limb and drapery, yet he has sacrificed his conviction, a tribute to envy."

"Socrates, let me flatter you by stealing from you the inquisitive form of address," said the master. "Do not orators create envy? Was not Pericles mulcted of his fair share of laughter by his pre-eminence in the art of persuasion?"

"Parrhasios, that is why I am always a questioner, and try to persuade others out of their own mouths, having noticed that eloquence from that source is the most frequently successful." Turning to Aristocles, "I praise Parrhasios both for having accepted a good idea from Smikros and for giving him his full share of the praise.

If you were as wise, you would say instead of 'He tore her root from the earth,' which seems suddenly to transform a young girl into a plant, 'he lifted her feet off the earth'; and also announce my collaboration whenever you recite your poem."

"But," the poet protested, "what Boreas did is more truly like tearing a flower up by the roots than lifting a girl off her feet."

"There is no persuading these versifiers that a single line they write might be bettered! Now, I never start a thought but I find someone able to brighten it, and then I receive back my own with as much thanks as I can induce them to accept."

Aristocles laughed uneasily, rose, and looking round cried, "But why is Smikros not here? I sent for him." But at this moment Kallias was ushered in, his stiff black cloak enlivened with silver-tailed hares of a dull red that leaped in every direction. Parrhasios, after he had saluted him, led him to Dione's couch, and then seated himself on the other side of Socrates, the young man having resumed his place. Kallias had evidently hurried more than a man of his birth should, and gave apologies for being late an undue importance. The philosopher's interest in them was so marked, that the new-comer soon seemed to address him only; and when his volubility permitted, Socrates cried, "I warrant that to-day punctuality would have cost you talents of gold, Kallias."

"You are right, for I have been out to talk with the captain of one of my ships that has just anchored off Salamis with a cargo of the finest copper; this must not be whispered in the

market till all is ready ; so I have told him to let no one leave the ship for a day or two," and the merchant king rubbed his hands with contentment.

" You want me to tell everyone I meet." Socrates smiled, but the other replied, " I doubt if it could reach the ears that ache for it, even if you did. There are many kinds of men in Athens and some hardly speak your idiom ; their thoughts debar them from communicating with you, as much as though their lips had been sewn up."

" I have noticed a kind of men," the philosopher replied, " whose heads are ever helmeted and visored lest they should see anyone not their enemy."

" Speak more plainly," the merchant laughed.

" I mean those who bleed or are bled by all with whom they have dealings." The merchant grinned and quoted " Peace hath her warriors too," adding, " not all as handsome as Alcibiades." Then the philosopher asked, " Would it not pay as well to bring fine men as fine copper to Athens ? "

" She is supposed to breed the best in the world, Socrates," smiled the other ; " but I think I take your meaning, for a very similar thought has occurred to me several times since last I sat here. I hope," he added, turning to Parrhasios, " that Smikros, the potter, has not already left ? "

" We are still expecting him."

" Good ! He set me thinking whether we might not be wise to educate some slave boys as carefully as our sons. If Smikros could give you an idea worth adopting, why should not such

another lad represent me at Tartessos? The difficulty is how to recognise these talents early enough. I would give you a fortune for a solution to that difficulty, Socrates."

"We are all invisible, Kallias."

"You mean? . . . By Zeus, I fear my brain rusts!"

"If you could see my mind, you would not need to ask."

"Ah, I am with you! If I could see a child's brains instead of his body I could place money on him, with security."

"When I used to watch the little Alcibiades playing," the philosopher replied, "I sometimes thought 'there is the man we want. He will surpass Uncle Pericles'; but then some petulance would make me sigh—'No, he is only a dog.'"

"Why a dog?" Aristocles asked.

"The dog runs and barks and loses patience with the sheep, but the shepherd stands on a point of vantage whence he can oversee, check and guide him. Generals and statesmen need this aloofness; subalterns curse and worry and rush about like dogs."

"Well, which was Alcibiades?" the young man asked eagerly.

"I could only see his body, so like a blind man I set out to study the invisible."

"Study the invisible?" Kallias repeated.

"The joiner taps the cypress plank and listens to judge if it be sufficiently seasoned. The monger probes the cheese with a grooved bodkin to judge if it be ripe. Questions, such as I have taught myself to ask, like a wet finger collect crumbs of perception about invisible persons. The feast is



for the Gods ; but like a child who rises betimes the morning after his father has had guests, I find enough to taste."

"But it would be no use my questioning little beggars so high," exclaimed Kallias. "Besides, it would take too long."

"Ah, this knowledge is only worth talents of gold to you," sighed the philosopher. But here the lady Dione cried, "Question mothers and nurses, Kallias; they often discriminate characters with surprising shrewdness."

"But does not love make them praise the least likely most?"

"Philosopher," Dione laughed, "how sharp you are!"

"But am I not right?"

"Aspasia always taught that the best mothers give most where most is needed, because they love all equally."

"The only sound principle of government where the common good is pretended," Aristocles cried, clapping his hands. Socrates then continued: "So Kallias must not question, but contrive to overhear what slave mothers say among themselves; for he does not pretend the common good, but his own."

"But have you yet discovered whether Alcibiades is a shepherd or a dog?" Aristocles asked.

Smikros was here led in by Gryllus, and no answer was returned, for he hung back behind his companion, who dragged him by the belt. This hulking fellow smiled ingratiatingly as he pointed out two bandaged hands that Smikros would fain have hidden. "The flesh is charred off. Andokides thrashed him, you see." He gulped, then

with a burst, "He spent the purse on a supper, just as fine as yourselves might—ornamented beds and tables, flute girls and slaves to wait, mulled wine;" his voice was once more sunk to a confiding whisper, and then with renewed effort he freed it. "We shall remember it as long as we live; drunk, speechless, not a man could recollect a single thing." A ripple of mirth greeted this, and Socrates asked, "Were his hands burnt while he was drunk?" "No," and the red-faced lout seemed unable to continue.

"How was it then?"

He stooped towards the philosopher and said, "For your ear, Andokides is in some ways the nearest man you could meet though you travelled Greece over. His old furnace is a disgrace, and he has lost ten times the cost of a new one in cracked pots that might have been sound. He buttresses and flanks the old thing till it has no more shape than a dunghill. But the silk lining of this sow's ear is that the foundations of a new one are now laid. But there, he's lost more in Smikros than in spoilt vases, for those hands are never like to draw the lapwing's crest over an amphora's belly again, or I'm much mistaken in doctors."

"But this is dreadful!" cried Dione. "Poor lad, are they still painful?"

"He's what you may call turned sullen; but if you ask me I take it the worst of the smart was over days since, save that an itching torments him towards nightfall."

"But how did it happen?" Socrates asked him again.

"I've lost my beginning," he replied, scratching

his head. "The purse would not pay for the feast—no blame to the generous giver—so Andokides had to visit his money bags, and that always sours him. Then Smikros must paint the feast on his next crater and write over it 'Smikros, the painter of vases, feasting his companions,' and make himself more like the young gentleman there than anyone short of his mother would have held warranted. So bad day trod on bad day, all as hot as a furnace, till Andokides did not know man from mule or beast from log; for cruel master he is not, and rarely draws blood, though his thong will flick about, when flies pester as they have lately. Well, he thrashed Smikros nearer to a corpse than I hope to come 'fore I'm laid out. There in the court, day and night, he could hardly sip what we brought him. Andokides was as savage with himself for having done it, as he had been about that supper, for more work was waiting painting than he himself could do. When Smikros could sit up, you never saw worse sullens—not a word even for onions fried with cheese. The old furnace lit, cracks again, flames come roaring out. There are always sacks in the trough ready to throw on so that the wet clay may be crammed in and the fault made good. But this gap yawned like Hephaestos' smithy and no one seemed drawn to the job. Andokides turns on Smikros, curses and cries, 'Clap these on quick!' and touches his sore shoulders with the thong. Up the lad leaps, lays hold of some sacks and thrusts them in, but before we got enough clay slabbed on, it began to crack and fall and Smikros rolls over, his hands useless for ever, it's my belief, though to cheer

the poor chap I'm always telling him they'll get better. Master, he's savage as though it had been his own son—and he treated Smikros like a son most times. Besides, of course, the flame got in among that batch of jars—a whole week's work lost and the best hand ruined. Enough to make a man claw his head and his face too," Gryllus ended.

Parrhasios had risen long before and was pacing to and fro, now covering his eyes and now his ears with his hands. Socrates also had regained his feet and leaned on his staff like a watcher on his spear above a battle, attentive only for the signal he was to pass on. Suddenly Aristocles leapt up and walking to Smikros lifted him like a child, planted him before the panel, and said, "Look, read." The effect was magical; the wretch began to sob and laugh. "Had the promise of that been yours instead of my purse, all this would never have happened." Smikros looked up at Aristocles and seemed to forget the panel. Dione, like an echo, continued Smikros' sobs as they ceased, while Gryllus gazed at the panel, kissed his hand and murmured, "Who'd have thought it, who'd have thought it?"

Already when my dear master first began roving like a lion in a cage, an impulse forced me to prepare to read, yet the presence of the others had counteracted this; but when I heard a drop fall from Aristocles' face and saw it shining on the floor at his feet, the silence seemed to implore relief and I began:

"Over Latmos slowed the moon:  
Endymion on the hill  
Slept in the warm summer night



Without a blanket ; still  
The forest lay beneath, the sea beyond.  
Out of her halting car with grace  
Selene leaned to view his face :  
Her gaze grew fond  
For her high solitary heart was stirred  
With wonder at the fashion of his youth.  
But though her blood sing loud, his has not heard  
Her flushed austerity confess the truth  
That she is formed to share that sleep  
And mingle life with his and give  
And take joy neither he nor she could keep.  
Yes, there is time to clear her stately mind,  
Glance on through future years and find  
Incompatible his mortal with  
Her immortalities.  
And when she gave the kiss  
She meant that it should change  
His flesh to marble and that he should lie  
Shapely and naked under every sky,  
Whether her car athwart the ether range  
Or darkness fill with 'wilderling snow  
Or storms bring deluges of rain  
Or under star or sun-light or grey day  
A steady windy clearness flow  
Over the lone top. Yea,  
He lies as he has lain,  
Posture unchanged, although the face  
Have weathered, and grey lichen stain  
And crust youth's nigh obliterated grace  
Till strangers might pass by, but shepherds say  
" Yon stone man sleeps " to turn their eyes his  
way  
" Since granfeyther's granfeyther's time and  
'fore."

Yet spring and summer still  
Selene as of yore  
Loiters full many a night upon that hill."

Silence returned, and I saw Socrates peering up towards me while he shaded his eyes with his hand. "Voices in the air," he said, turning to Dione. "A bodiless voice, for so much as I can see has nothing to do with what I have heard. If your true voice is as much more beautiful than what we see of you, I should dearly like to hear it, lady."

"Do I not use my true voice then, Socrates?"

"A man suits his voice to his appearance in order to defend his invisibility."

"But the young and the beautiful," cried Kallias, "may have to ennoble rather than to degrade its music to match their happy forms."

"Unless, Kallias, the invisible is always finer than what we see."

"I thought you despised poetry, Socrates?" Dione asked archly.

"I love the sound of it but dread its propensity for lying, just as I love our Plato's looks, but am scared by the confusions of his mind." Aristocles had left Smikros and stood beside the speakers. The master was busied with the slaves in the portico, and did not turn back into the room, remaining at the division of the carpets looking out. The other three now engaged in a low-voiced conversation which by their glances I divined to concern myself. Kallias left his seat in order to hear what they said. Parrhasios received some spangled muslin from a slave, came forward, whispered to Dione and laid it in her lap; she rose and drew Aristocles aside, who took the

drapery and turned to Smikros with these words : " I had you brought here that Socrates, who is the wisest man in Athens, might judge between you and Parrhasios. But he has thrown up his case and satisfied you privately, so now I am going to array you as becomes the vanquisher of Parrhasios. Let me first seat you on this stool," and he tilted the sleeping ape from off it, which, grunting, gaping and stretching, hobbled out to the slaves in the portico. In spite of his ugliness this animal has found and kept a place in Parrhasios' affection. In fact I have heard him say that his human semblance is droll and even pathetic, whereas men are only hideous in apelikeness. But now Smikros, throne and all, was draped in the vast green veil striped with gold. His head alone remained visible and smiled to see himself so splendid, and still more radiantly when the master set a crown of gilded laurel leaves over his brow. Gryllus grinned, " You fancy yourself now, but this finery will spoil you worse than your hands," and then at a sign from Parrhasios withdrew into the portico to the other slaves. I understood that my dear master, unable to endure the sight of those maimed arms, had hit upon this device : but Aristocles now addressed the sage. " The dispute has been privately composed which you came here to judge ; but I beg you nevertheless to pronounce a discourse in praise of Smikros."

" How can I speak on a subject about which I know nothing ?"

" Why, your boast is that consciousness of ignorance inspires your life."

" Ha, ha ! What sort of fish is this that the

gods have sent to my net in my old age ? ” cried the philosopher, and seized Aristocles by both shoulders, peering up into his face ; then, dropping his arms and turning to Parrhasios, he sighed : “ He quotes me, but so that I cannot recognise myself in my words. But, Plato, this is your idea ; you are at the eloquent age, so fire away.”

“ No, no, Socrates, you shall not escape me so.”

“ How dreadfully persistent the young are. Dear lady, I appeal to you : should not he who desires something said say it rather than deputy the office to one who prefers silence ? ”

“ Socrates, my dear mother-in-love, Aspasia, used to say, “ Give to those who ask, for if you refuse you must fear the Nemesis of never being asked when you are dying to give.”

“ Well, that lady was all but as wise as Diotima, so I yield, yet on terms. I will praise Smikros only if you first praise Parrhasios ; you came hither primed for his defence, therefore you cannot plead lack of preparation.” The young man blushed and smiled, so that the others settled themselves back on the couches and looked to him in expectation.

“ I, as a poet, might be excused for maintaining that the ear by which we listen to wisdom and appreciate melody harbours the most important of man’s senses, and suspicious aloofness grows on the deaf, till, like wild animals, they mistrust even those who are kindest, becoming sullen and intractable : whereas great poets have been blind. Nevertheless, we must perforce give the primacy to sight among all the faculties of man, though the failure of it does not appear to dehumanise like loss of hearing ; for those poets were born



seeing, and having stored their memories with every lovely form in the fresh and avid period of youth, they were not permitted to watch the slow dimming of beauty in those whom they had loved or to study the many blights and deformities of plant and animal, of man and woman, which to childhood seem less conspicuous and important than to maturity. This disillusionment which commonly, like the shadow of a cloud, travels across the face of things as years run on, was shuttered from their experience, while the gate of wisdom and harmony still remained open ; therefore they could bring fruit forth from fully sinewed minds deep with the dewy bloom of a dawning receptiveness, as though autumn's grapes and peaches could be sprinkled over with the violets and primroses of spring. Poetry casts its most triumphant spell when joy accompanies wisdom ; as we picture Homer, blind and reverend, led by the hand of a radiant child in whose eyes the whole world appears a garden of delight, and even the fate of its companion like a story which begets tears and tenderness without dejecting the soul. But those born blind are in as miserable a case as those born deaf and dumb. Now poets can only appeal to memory by means of musical sounds and thoughts, but the gods have given a form to every life with a power of endless self-repetition, so that this year corresponds to last as strophe to strophe in an ode ; whereas how feeble is the memory of summer when snow loads the earth, how faint the recollection of a dead man compared with the presence of a live one ! What a pæan is the body of man ! How easy and abundant in motion,



delicate yet strong, clear yet complex! Even when we see it half forgotten and garbled by slave and barbarian, our eyes follow it full of regret that the darkness of their minds has overruled their eyes, so that they got this poem by heart but imperfectly. The painter singles out some uncorrupted version of this divine pæan, and removing even the slightest hitch, repeats it like a rhapsodist, with its pristine harmony. He teaches us not the language of poets, but that of the gods, which human life is so prone to degrade and forget. He and the sculptor assure us that the bulk of the divine discourse is not conveyed in ambiguous oracles, or the doubtfully decipherable entrails of victims, or the behaviour of birds; but is clear, lovely and intelligible in every perfect form of life, in every graceful attitude, in every poise of head or glance or smile, eloquent with divine gentleness or puissant with fire from a guileless and unbetrayed heart. Therefore painters and sculptors, who use the language of the gods, stand nearer and dearer to them than poets, who only use the language of men divinely; for their eloquence is like that of a god in disguise, or travelling, who has to make use of the words known to those among whom he finds himself, whereas those others speak as the gods speak in their own place, directly embodying their whole thought in a living form. Parrhasios, king of painters, not only repeats strophes in this divine language but himself composes in it, showing us in one panel 'The Powers of the Air,' that diviner water of the gods; its strength and power in Boreas, its majesty and lofty amplitude in Hera, its refusal to be sullied and enslaved by

the reeking soil in Iris, whose scarf blows athwart the back of the storm—and run how you may you shall never seize the end of it, for thus the goddess mocks the brown hands of Satyros. And in this panel the very excellence of Light is declared ; its tender and inviolable aloofness in that first kiss bestowed by Selene on the sleeping shepherd, the occasion and results of which you have heard so eloquently dilated on in Melanipides' poem : then its awful sovereignty in Apollo, along whose bow arm rushes, like a wide-mouthed lion breathing flame, the deadly invasion of heat to melt the frail wax wings of over-weening Icarus ; while along that which holds the arrow proceeds like darting python that invisible madness which drove the vain-glorious Phaëthon from his fool-hardy imitation of the god ; and, in the third section, behold Light's divine tenderness and rejuvenescence, where Eos weeps because she cannot end the immortal life she so fondly bestowed on Tithonos ! They both are at last ready to plead with Selene for a second kiss like that she gave to Endymion. These two splendid paintings prove vain any dream of other human faculty rivalling with that discoverer of light which enables us to adore beauty. Parrhasios is acknowledged king limner and has a right to the help of his subjects, for is he not the focus of their power, by which their strength is applied to the conquest of new territories for their art ? He then can never be in debt to any of them, for they owe him their utmost."

Dione cried " Beautiful," clapping her hands and making her braceleted arms tinkle festively. The heavier hands of Kallias and Socrates sup-

ported her applause, while the master rose blushing and kissed his blushing eulogist. "He is well praised," Smikros declared, "and Mr. Sophist will have a stiff job to praise me as well, but I do think some of this praise ought to have gone to the gear—that three-decker, the powdered lapis, the fine feather pencils, this workroom, and the slaves at call ready to fetch and carry. Who knows what I couldn't paint if I had had all this to hand for a year or two?" This naive betrayal of self-confidence was greeted with a laugh, and there ensued a buzz of appreciative exclamations over diverse beauties of the speech, out of which I presently heard Dione declare that the little Milo ought now to read us the second kiss of Selene. So when I perceived they all seemed to await it, I began :

"A man who journeys west of north and toils  
Over range and plain, in five or six  
Days will view the wide sweep of Olympus  
Rise ahead and on his right hand, topping  
Darker summits, massive fair and dreamlike  
With aching leagues of snow. And many think  
Then that they see the gods' Acropolis,  
Built with their homes and precincts of resort.  
Great is their error, however glad their eyes.  
Not flanked or buttressed against earthy granite  
But on a travelling raft of rugged cloud  
Is founded the gods' hill town, white yet warm,  
That, reared in azure peace, recedes through  
ether  
Till out of sight be out of mind for men :  
Yet on rare visits looms above this world,  
Tremendous in approach, and dwarfs those snow-  
fields.

So he who steers past Rhodes one day or two  
A little south of east, if Fortune favour,  
Beholds enshored with spits of level cloud  
A second liquid ocean high in air,  
And in its tranquil midst an isle entranced  
Famous for trees whose boughs and stems are white  
And leafage orange and their twigs in bloom.  
No colour, no sweet smell, but song ! pure song,  
As though a wingless bird had burst the bud !  
Smooth hills clumped with such trees surround  
a house

Of shining phosphor stone with pink porch-pillars ;  
From lawns of lemon heath wide steps of pearl  
Lead up to where across the entry lies  
An object strange like amber mixed with snow,  
From which a studious gaze at length evolves  
A face and torso and four limbs reclined  
Deep in the silver and extravagant flow  
Of long locks and a beard to reach the feet :  
Human it seems, wrinkled with age and joy.  
And ever just upon the break of day  
Forth from between those pillars Eos comes,  
Almost too young for love, a female child ;  
Pauses before, light-limbed, with rapturous veils,  
She leap out into air like a strong bird.  
Her fond glance pauses on that motionless man.  
A ringing echo to his silent laugh  
Shapes on her tender lips and then escapes  
And is not ended ere the Hesperides  
See the grey night flush with her gay advent.

That is Tithonos whom she fed with joy,  
To whom she fondly gave immortal life  
Forgetting that time must wither and waste his  
strength



Since neither he nor she could keep it young—  
Despite renewal drawn from parenthood  
Which prolonged and rehearsed their mutual glee  
Bathing it in their Memnon's early years.  
For soon they had to send him here to school  
Where demigods can win immortal fame  
Spending on death the courage meant for life.  
Now sweet and tender mirth can so preserve  
The sap and springy promptness of the limbs,  
Tithonus had endured two hundred years  
Before his laugh failed hers, and by that time  
Gladness had worked his earthy substance clear  
As amber, honey or chalcedony.  
Then laughter grew a palsy and gave pain :  
Too weak for more, he daily prayed for peace,  
A boon she could not grant,—poor child, in tears  
A second time ; for she the first time wept  
On finding Memnon stretched along the sand  
Disfigured with his wounds ; then that young  
mother  
Lifted her son, whose mortal years appeared  
More than her own immortal—carried him  
With tears that filled her heavy footprints up,  
So fast they fell, so slowly could she move  
Burdened with that grown man's weight stiff in  
death.  
She crossed a shrubless plain from rim to rim  
Dinted its arid miles and left those pools,  
The only things alive under the night,  
To wink with light and tremble at the wind.  
Zeus saw them and revived her son a god,  
Then, comfort-winged, she might regain her isle  
To weep next that his father could not die  
Who first had wept because her son was dead.  
But there are wiser elder goddesses.



Waning Selene visits there each month  
And reins her silver dragons at that porch.  
She heard his prayer and knew her lips could  
grant  
For was not young Endymion still a stone ?  
A second time she kissed a man, intent  
To crystal all his flesh, a second time  
Rejoiced that she had conquered ages since  
Those common instincts native to her form.

Ethereal gales breathe o'er that upper sea  
And fan those island hills and tune their holts  
Yet weather not as wintry storms have worn  
The stone Endymion,—weather not like that  
Those precious substances, that alabaster  
Tithonus lying there on day's threshold  
Where Eos sings each morn,  
Remembering the mirth she had with him :  
As children ponder how their parents loved  
With innocent wondering minds that picture  
always  
Glad changeless hearts and everlasting youth,  
So fall to warbling tunes  
Like those which rouse that isle  
When her voice leads the chorus of its trees,—  
Music that sea-farers,  
Having touched at Rhodes  
And not yet sighted  
Cyprus under the dawn,  
Hear faint and dying  
Fall from an open sea  
That breaks in waves of light against the clouds."

A moment's silence; and then Socrates' staff,  
on which he had been resting, though seated, fell  
with a loud noise, jolting his head down almost on

to his knees ; and as he recovered it with a just audible yawn, he exclaimed, " Was I asleep ? "

" Scandalous ! " cried Dione. " It is unforgivable if you were. " But Smikros laughed till the tears ran out of his eyes, so that no one was able to resist the contagion. When conversation could be resumed the philosopher explained, " The poem was so beautiful that it seemed to me impossible that I was awake. "

" No more, " cried Parrhasios, " your heresy is well known. "

" Beautiful things really do make me feel as though I were dreaming, " Aristocles said. " True in a sense, but that trance is intensely alert, " the master replied ; " any inadvertence like dropping a staff would shatter it. " Socrates chuckled ; but Dione changed the subject by declaring that she saw the footprints of the dawn flashing like silver mirrors dropped all across a flat, dim land ; " they are far brighter than a sky in which almost all the stars are dead. " " Yes, " the young man cried ecstatically, " Melanipides was never more magically inspired than when he filled them with her tears. That merry goddess ' almost too young for love '—' almost '—and then those deep footprints filled with tears. "

But Smikros interjected : " Won't Mr. Philosopher praise me ? I'm all an itch to know what he'll be after saying. "

Finding attention focussed on him, the sage began. " It has never been my luck to catch a winged horse. How then should I match the eloquence of my Plato ? Smikros will suffer in more ways than one from his praise being entrusted to me. A blind man, who has no fair child to lead

him, goes tapping with a stick to make sure where next to place his foot, giving warning the while in a voice addressed to no one in particular, lest some swiftly moving person, not noticing that his eyes are useless, should blunder into him. Such is the gait of my eloquence. Smikros, would you not rather have lost the use of your eyes than of your hands?" "No." "Have you thought it out?" "What do you mean?" "What blind men have you known?" "There's the polisher." "What does he polish?" "The vases as soon as the varnish is dry. He finishes them, poising them on his finger-tips, whistling like a blackbird. His touch is so clever he even discovers which are the best painted as well as the most shapely." "A happy man?" "As jolly as a cricket." "I myself knew a blind basket-maker who was more cheery under the rule of the Two Hundred than anyone else in Athens. Defeat, catastrophe, no news seemed to upset him; and when the Lacedemonians took Decelea he still joked over weaving and selling wicker-work. So eyes may not be worth all that Plato pretends. Which would you rather—stare at the world or change it?" "Change it." "How would you do that?" "Make Alcibiades king." "Set about it then." "Dunno where to begin," Smikros laughed. "Is it not better to do what you can do well than to bungle?" "Yes." "What are you best at?" "Drawing on craters and jugs." "Before your accident; but unless the leech heals your hands, that's ended." At this Smikros became sullen and made no answer, and Dione exclaimed: "It is too cruel to remind him so."

“Listen to me, Smikros,” said Socrates, “for I believe you know how to do something far more wonderful than painting vases—something that for years I’ve bungled at.” “What’s that?” “How did Pericles change Athens?” “How?” “He made it more beautiful and stronger than it had ever been before.” “Yes.” “But not strong enough, as our misfortunes have proved.” “Yes.” “In order to raise so many fine buildings he had to increase the skilled hands of Athens an hundredfold. That was gain, for ‘cunning hand means wary head’; but unfortunately he seemed to do this by means of speeches, and his hearers never noticed that they had but one oration from Pericles for every thousand they heard from others. They only remembered his because he changed their minds to good purpose, but that was not how he changed Athens; that was only how he persuaded them to let him make her strong and beautiful. How did he do it then? He had a good eye for the invisible part of men and he trained it. Pheidias was his friend, to whom he gave control over all the other architects and artificers, and Pheidias *was* the best artist. But he could not pass this gift on to Alcibiades, who has used his eloquence and personal magic not to build or occupy men’s hands but only to stir up quarrels—Athenians against Sicilians, Lacedaemonians against us and then against the Persians, and the Persians against them; and the changes he has yet effected are a very poor set-off to those Pericles brought about. Would you not rather change the world as Pericles did than as Alcibiades is now doing?” “I should have a better chance of success!” “{Pericles



made even me different from the other sophists, for I was prenticed to a sculptor, and Pheidias bade us watch the youths and boys at their gymnastics so as to impart more life to our figures, and as I watched young Alcibiades and other splendid lads, I thought 'Here are living statues that need finishing' and then I wanted to do what you did when you first came here. I wanted to inspire the daimons who were at work on them, to guide their divine hands as you did those of Parrhasios; but whereas you succeeded in darting your idea into his mind, I failed, and neither Alcibiades nor his daimon seem ever to have realised the difference between a shepherd and his dog. And here is Aristocles," turning affectionately, admiringly, to the young man seated beside him, "I call him Plato, and he tempts me even more than Alcibiades to interpose between the invisible master and his handiwork. He ought to be something more splendid than a poet, should he not? I cannot think those invisible sculptors of men are so wise as they are powerful, or how are we to account for so many tragedies? Their wits can scarcely be as sharp as their chisels: and earnestly as I long to compass Plato's perfection, so earnestly do I entreat you to teach me this art of darting the notion I have of his improvement into the mind of that invisible master who is chipping at him; for I must tell you that I am convinced that this art of yours is the only art that can restore Athens to the glory Pericles gave it, and make it stronger and more beautiful yet. Had Pericles been able not only to build the Parthenon but also to carve the character of Alcibiades and



other youths, instead of pulling so much of his work to pieces they would have built more with stone, and made less frequent and more successful wars. Now do help me. I want Plato to feel and act on this idea. You must discover what truth and beauty really are before you can write a beautiful poem."

Smikros had followed keenly all the philosopher said, and now bent his head and knit his brows while we waited for his answer. Just at this moment a level shaft of sunlight from the northwest slanted in through the window and threw the shadow of my profile high up on the wall opposite the panels. Those on the couches turned towards the light, though both Smikros and myself remained absorbed over the problem Socrates had broached. It seems that my dear master now rose, and, with a gesture, imploring silence, crossed the room a-tiptoe, and rapidly noted in chalk on the wall beneath the outline of my silhouette as it was cast by the sunlight above. This sketch he has since used for a shade who gazes out from the rocks whence Hermes is leading Persephone, in his "Earth Goddesses." Only when the chalk broke in his hand and fell was I aroused to what was happening; and immediately we were all startled by Smikros, who shouted: "What's the use of talking! Mr. Sophist, I might have rated Parrhasios for ever and he never seen what I was driving at, but I showed him with my hand. Show your young friend how to jump over his shadow backward or what you will, and he'll do it better than you could yourself, to judge from his looks." "Very true, if I wanted to guide his hands or his feet ;

but it is the intangible part of him I want to shape." "Tell him what you want. If he understands he thinks the same, but I guess you have not thought right, that's why he don't take to it. Parrhasios would not have swallowed my hook if I had not baited it just so." "But my thought is sound." "No use, *you must be.*" "Smikros, you open my eyes. How could I, a poor carver, be what the princely Alcibiades ought to have been? How can an old man be and do what young Plato should? Now I understand Melanipides. Selene wanted to change Endymion's mind, but, being divine, knew she could not touch the intangible, and rather than leave ignorance and crude passion to degrade his body she changed that in all its beauty to a stone. But Eos was too young, she thought to immortalize dancing limbs and laughing lips; but they wasted, and her lover grew peevish, and she found she had perpetuated misery, not rapture. Parrhasios, too, does well to place Apollo between them with the torrid wrath of the lion on one arm and the rapid venom of the serpent on the other, defending the invisible from the sons of women. I resemble Phaëthon and Icarus and Eos by my presumption, and it is you and Parrhasios and Melanipides who are wise!" and Socrates seemed as much cast down as though his daimon had been driven from him. But Smikros was not comfortable and soon spoke. "I'm not sure, Mr. Sophist, if my mind's a match for your tongue, but this I will say. You cry thanks for my opening your eyes and then speak of failure and despair; but I, since my hands were burnt, was in despair and my eyes were shut to every hope. But when I saw that inscription

a weight rolled off my mind. I felt I had done something fine and that perhaps my hands would heal. Are those eyes open that see despair or those that see success and hope? That's what I ask; for I take it when a man's done what he meant to, his eyes open, and when he fails, they shut."

Socrates clapped his hands and turned to the others. "So the thought with which we started this afternoon receives confirmation from a fresh mind and grows clearer. Performance precedes vision. Do and then think, for insight is born of practical success; though this cart is always put before this horse, and men hold themselves wise to think before they leap. Yet the child who thinks about it never leaps at all until he can forget himself again. The newly born wave their hands vaguely and watch their movements for some time before they learn to direct them. Skill is thought proved right by success, but you must blunder before you can win, and carve stone before you shape men. Ha, ha!" and he rubbed his hands. "Fine success in shaping matter lifts the lids of doubt and despair off our invisible eyes, so that they see the road ahead and the fair city to which it leads, and need no longer tap like a blind man with a stick. And thus I have praised Smikros by proving that his mind is fertile because his hands had learnt fine skill, and in so doing I set him above Alcibiades, because with him words shoot ahead and flustered action fails to catch them up, whereas with Pericles silence and action preceded and speech drew others after them; and above Plato because he presents very wordy tragedies before he has bruised his

fingers and broken his heart with mallet and chisel ; and above Kallias because he hurries about driven by the desire of riches, instead of occupying his hands in order to school his desires, and though his success cheers him it does not procure him vision and insight because it is due to the activity of his feet and tongue instead of to the skill of his hands. Often my own heart sinks and despairs because my hand has thrown down the chisel ; but then again I begin to hope that because I make these discoveries I am training a new hand, the invisible hand that will one day shape men's souls as finely as Pheidias shaped ivory and bronze. Now you yourselves have throned him there above Parrhasios. So he is our king, for I am only a beginner in this art of darting new impulses into the soul and have never yet won such success as his with Parrhasios."

All hands were clapped and there was laughter over the roguish innuendoes of Socrates.

"Sweet and tart blended," said Smikros, "that's what I call Mr. Sophist's laudation. First I think 'Ha ! I'm like Pericles' and then, 'No, he's got a prong in me' ; and then I scold myself, 'You're touchy, the old tup means well.' Only one thing I'm sure of—he's too clever !" Kallias laughed : "You may take my word for it, Smikros, in the long run you'll remember the sting of his tongue and forget the kiss of his lips."

"No, no," interposed Aristocles. "And I'm of your mind too, my young lord, for I've noticed *Sun shines on long ago* is a true saying, and this too, *Memory stores more summers than winters*," the beaming Smikros concluded.



Now the slaves who had been waiting for a pause began to fold back the heavy carpets. The awning was already furled, for the sun had left the court, and in the portico were collected quails and pheasants from yards, corridors and roofs ; for at this hour they come to be fed. Among them stepped a peacock ; and all began to venture into the room, with suspicious reserve, sinking quick-eyed heads into a ruff of neck and shoulder only to jet them forth again with inquisitive hardihood ; or with foot lifted high they deliberate, to retrieve the effect of some too rapid advance. Parrhasios took a basket from a slave and cast a handful of corn on the flags, then laughed with glee at their eagerness and address in seizing the coveted grains from one another ; he called to them as to children, encouraging the backward, reproving and defeating the greedy. Meanwhile down from the rafters had fluttered doves and pigeons, settling on the basket, arms, and shoulders of the master, and clouding up whenever he swung his hand. Smikros shouted aloud and Socrates was as pleased, especially when Dione put into his hand some kernels of which they are particularly fond, and three or four pigeons made a battle of frustrated wings, as each prevented the others from steadying or gaining a foothold from which to reach the prize.

There were pheasants that Persian fanciers obtain from those who trade farther east, with hoods of yellow or white, daintily lined with black ; others had burning copper bosoms laced over with bold curves of dark metallic blue, the whole effect enlivened with spots of white about



as big as a pea. The splendour of such satraps was set off by the tender-hued doves and homely quails. The sleek-fitting plumage of so many comely creatures, the hurried walk of pigeons nodding their heads with uninterrupted self-approval, the shy running of the quails, sidelong glances of bead-like eyes and rapid winking of shutter-like lids, attitude and gestures, barbaric, savage, daemonic, or of an equally startling reserve and civility, gave occasion for innumerable exclamations of delight, and calls to others to remark what had pleased.

"The palette of Apollo!" cried Parrhasios, comprising the group on the floor. "Each colour has its proper form and life."

"Thou Alcibiades of birds!" Aristocles apostrophised the peacock, "is thine the soul of a shepherd or of a dog?"

"How great a dignity yet how small a brainpan," mocked Kallias; and Dione, as her arms tinkled in defending her from the pigeons who coveted every morsel she designed for the timid quails, sighed. "These birds are my despair. Who, after studying them, can hope to contrive an appropriate costume?"

Suddenly Aristocles noticed that Smikros was craning to see, as, all the company having risen, they in a great measure cut off his view. Immediately he was seized throne and all, and planted, like Xerxes in the midst of the Persian camp, among the birds, who scattered in a circle as though to show deference for his gilded state.

"How self-contained they are!" cried the philosopher. "Their actions never belie their forms; it is impossible to expect from them more

virtue than they exhibit, whereas man's soul always finds action and thought inadequate. Yesterday I met a child in a toy cart hitched on behind a dray; even thus the soul progresses, behind action and eloquence, yet in their despite."

"That is true, Socrates, of our waking hours; but in sleep we may see the gods as they see us, unhindered by the always in some measure ill-adjusted agency of matter," the master said, handing his empty basket back to a slave. "The recollection of how Hera appeared to me in a vision of the night dissatisfies me with her figure more than with the others, though it has received most praise. How ran those lines, my dear, which you repeated to me a month since, 'The universe is lame, compared with . . .' how did it go?" Then Aristocles began reciting:

"'Beauty! and oh 'twas I who saw  
It pure! So perfect that the frame  
Of all the universe seemed lame  
Compared with what no line could draw  
Nor mind therefrom infer a law!  
Art, yet not in failing learned!  
A sunray never stopped or turned!  
Life's fair march made without a halt;  
Her curious form without a fault;  
Her story written without blot!  
All beauty, and all in one spot.'"

"That's how I felt," sighed Parrhasios. "Whose are the lines?" asked Dione. "They were attributed to Simonides. I read them two years ago in a scroll belonging to Agathon who has since mislaid it, and I cannot answer for all the words as I pieced them with makeshifts when I found memory at fault," Aristocles explained.

"Even poets must allow that the real god is invisible," the philosopher pursued; "though he take this form or that, bird or bull, dream or unhewn stone, his divinity only counterfeits these objects in order to address the sense of the beholder."

"But every god has a proper form which is human," Parrhasios ruled.

"Only more perfect than that of any man," added the poet.

"The statues of Apollo do not strike me as more perfect than your body," retorted the philosopher. The young man flushed and laughed, but Parrhasios continued: "The sculptors desired to make them so, but fell short of their aim."

"Yet how easily the gods might have inspired them to succeed," quizzed the philosopher; "surely they must desire to be known in their true forms?" he added, but the master pursued: "Though I am familiar with many canons of proportion I had not presence of mind enough, so dazed by admiration as I then was, to note exactly every point wherein Hera surpassed them." And Aristocles chimed in, "Little by little the masters approach the ideal, led on by vision and dream. Pheidias came nearer than Miron, Polycleitos in some ways nearer still." But Socrates took him up. "The gods then are invisible even though they may be preparing men to see them as they are. I shall be delighted to see justice evident in the mien of Zeus and pure intelligence in that of Pallas, for neither in the Parthenon nor at Olympus was I satisfied, therefore concluded that the true God must be invisible like a character divined through action,

not palpable like a body. When I listen to my daimon I find it necessary to close my eyes even in the presence of the most beautiful companion, lest my spirit should be confused by sensuous impressions."

"But Parrhasios' eyes were fast in sleep," cried Aristocles; "he saw in vision as you hear in trance." "Then I understand you to believe that Parrhasios saw Hera as she is, even as I see you as you are?" "Who knows what to believe about the gods?" retorted the young man. "I only say why should Parrhasios be deceived by his senses rather than you by yours?"

"When my daimon speaks, does he shape air with an invisible mouth? Or does his proximity excite memories of articulate sound vivid enough to abuse my ears?" the philosopher parried: and, seeing his questioner nonplussed, proceeded, "When I gaze at Dione or yourself I admire, only after a time to doubt whether beauty would not move me better if I held your hand with closed eyes, or even, not touching or seeing you, were nevertheless completely convinced of your being. Is not Dione hung like a Tyrian curtain in front of some daimon? We look at her as a child eyes a cover in which it knows that a new toy is wrapped. No gay needlework on that cloth fastens its gaze; nay, the knowledge that a gift is inside prevents its really admiring those patterns, just as Parrhasios found he could not study the visionary Hera, though he had trained his mind to that end. Invisible, she divided his attention with a cheating dream, and so his recollection of its traits proved delusive. Should her majesty now stand behind that panel—I say



behind as we say above for Olympus or within for the soul—but were she now near us we might all see the figure he has painted as beautiful as he thought his dream; yet it would not be changed but stimulated by her approach, our minds would drape her faulty portrait in luminous and moving grace. May not those whom the gods frequent see everything more beautiful than it really is? And though their eyes be cheated yet are they blessedly near a god. Has it ever happened that one day a poem which has often ravished fails to stir your soul? I see you have had such disappointments. That day you were alone when you read; always before an invisible friend's head had bent over the scroll side by side with your own. These are random guesses, but reason tells us the senses perceive naught but the sensuous; thought is only cognizant of thought, then why is not character as exclusively aware of character? Here is Smikros travestied in shimmering tinsel; but that touselly head of his, those hungry black eyes, and all that bloodless face peaked with suffering may at times be the far more cunning disguise of some rare proud daimon,—no mere Satrap but the very Pericles of that world where affections and intentions pass directly, and are independent of our clumsy signalling codes of speech and gesture. The invisible, intangible, immaterial, should be apprehended and measured in ways we as yet have no dream of: though this sense for something divine in picture, poem, or person, the sudden permissions and inhibitions to which I am subject, may constitute an embryonic discovery of that communion. Could we be thus dissatisfied with



the relation of sound to sense and form to soul, if no better fusion were possible? Is not our sentiment of character, however tenuous and illusive, related to the direct converse between god's mind and god's mind, as an infant's well-nigh empty imitation of the sounds of talk is to articulate speech? The beauty we see and the wisdom we hear may be neither copy nor translation of the divine, but a distinct thing, sometimes governed by its flow, like weeds in a stream or foliage in the breeze."

"Then, Socrates," Aristocles demurred, "the search for truth is hopeless, for immediate knowledge is only of unreality, only of this dummy world of matter; and poets are wiser than philosophers, since they let rhythms control their thoughts. This character, of which we have so embryonic a sentiment, must surely be akin to rhythm rather than to thought or fact?"

"Ha, ha, my Plato will make me say what he means, whatever I really say, and this exemplifies what I mean by character; for I imagine it to be an order in the appreciation of virtue, by which whenever a soul becomes conscious of worth, that value is immediately discerned as congruent with the whole of that soul, even as tributary streams become part of a river. And I accuse poets and artists of focussing attention on the leaves or the weed, whereas it is the flow which bends them that is divine; their movement is only an occasional index to a greater, purer, freer life."

"A little while ago the soul took advantage of the lumbering word and action to hitch its little cart on behind, as a child may put its toy in tow of a wagon," laughed Aristocles.

“What a memory he has for words and images, and how the sense eludes him!” the philosopher commented, and then changing banter to earnest: “My dear, was I not then saying the soul gets little help from thought and action and that little in their despite? Even as the leaves of a tree, though they call attention to the wind, do not forward but hinder its movement; the service they render is merely to make its passage known to our dim eyes. The tree remains rooted by nature, whereas the wind’s is to pass; and had I used the image of the boy in the toy cart at this stage in my argument, I should have pressed it home by relating how I asked where he was going and he told me ‘the *observation post* is behind, I have passed the *wild weather-tortured fig* and see the *hot and cold springs* just ahead!’ for his mind ran as swiftly as Achilles overtaking Hector, yet the wagon was all the time crawling back from Piræus with the lading of a ship. He got a hint of movement from it, but neither the quality nor the pace, nor the desired direction, so left-handed is the aid of matter to the soul. Whether reality does not hold some such relation to the tangible world, is the enquiry to which I hope you will devote time and powers that I believe will be comparatively wasted writing poems and dramas.”

“O, but I love to sit in my cart,” smiled Aristocles, rhythmically easing his arms above his head while poising his weight a-tiptoe, first to one side then to the other. Dione touched Parrhasios to call his attention. Socrates comprehended the scene with a smile. “Form and movement are not beauty,” he chuckled, “for matter intrudes, and these physical interruptions

tax the patience of the soul ! ” Aristocles blushed, and taking refuge in a boyish irresponsibility, cried, “ My cart, my cart is a ship : Bacchus and Ariadne are aboard ! But a jolt converts it to a chest and I become Danæe nursing her babe, and, however fancy transform it, my joy sings, so long as I need not call it a cart,” and a pirouette expressed his escape from logic ; while Kallias cried : “ Bravo ! ” Socrates yielded readily to the relief that with a stir and smiles the whole company drew from this break of gaiety, and cried cheerily : “ I feel as young as before my father put a chisel in my hand, and perhaps I ought first to teach you to chip stone before thrusting invisible tools on you.” But here Smikros cut him short with a sudden burst of weeping. Dione crooned soothingly : “ Alas ! What ails you ? Speak, for we are kind, we are your friends.”

“ Only one part of me was finely made—my hands,” he wailed, “ and he is perfect, top to toe, and yet, as Mr. Sophist says, my invisible part might outrival his. To think that when I thrust my hands into the furnace I half hoped to . . . ” his voice died away in a wail, then broke out bitterly again, “ Every man is his own worst enemy, they say, and I’ve been mine.”

“ But why did you wish to burn your hands ? ” Socrates asked.

“ O, anything to make Master feel ; to have him curse himself for doing what he’d done ! ”

“ Bah ! ” Kallias exclaimed, “ the victim hopes for sympathy from the bully ! Where will fools not look for fellow feeling ? ”

“ Say, rather ‘ We all try to use other minds as looking-glasses ? ’ ”

"How puzzling you are, philosopher," sighed Dione. "Dear lady, I do not agree with Kallias that only fools seek a reflection of their own emotion on other faces, even on those of their enemies." Amusedly the poet now asked whether the most harmonious souls hanker after the image of their own in other minds, even as those whose faces are fairest grow over-fond of their mirrors! "Perhaps," the old man mused.

"But that is obviously not true," cried Dione, "for the best minds are the most independent."

"Does any true thought seek corroboration?" queried Aristocles. Socrates reflected and presently replied: "We both seek corroboration and suspect it; for we know that men's minds have a power to discover truth, but also know that they are hoodwinked and biassed. Our first impulse is to free ourselves from delusion by placing our judgment beside one patently untrammelled by the passion that sways us; but once persuaded that our conclusions were well derived and natural, we are ready to defy those of minds moved by prejudices that we do not share; and then it is that we risk to become over-enamoured of the beauty, freedom and justice of our own findings."

"Poor Smikros could have no doubt that he had been wronged," demurred Aristocles. "And," Socrates retorted, "for that very reason would demand that even those least likely to should acknowledge the hugeness of the injustice at once. Passion is violent and will be satisfied at no matter what cost; besides, it was his revenge to force regret from his master's lips." Dione murmured,



" Perhaps our feelings press to be shared in proportion to their strength ? "

" Can deep promptings only become lucid when they are mutual ? " the young man rephrased it. And she resumed : " As a girl I learnt a poem about Aidoneus and Persephone in which the god first desired her because she was strange, but afterwards still more because he found himself in her eyes.

' He seized her by that scarlet frock ;  
This foreign wonder had blue eyes !  
Dropped like a scarf athwart a rock  
Her image on his gaunt heart lies,  
While reverence blows like humid wind  
Across his thirsty desert mind.

' Lo ! then, he found within her eyes  
The little child he once had been :  
Asleep, not dead, in memory lies  
Our infancy, and will wash clean  
Like linen—all its trembling glee  
And fresh delight in flower and tree ! '

and the poem went on to describe how Persephone's dread and sense of violation were in their turn transformed,

' When she looked up and saw a cry  
For more than pardon in his eye.'

Aspasia smiled at the naivety of these lines, but would dwell on the thought ; so I remember them though the rest has vanished. She taught that we might never lose the child's integrity of enjoyment if we could only live without haste and confusion, dealing with things one at a time."

Aristocles exclaimed : " Perhaps no joy would



ever stale if memory could restore the circumstances of its first occurrence perfectly!" but Dione continued, "She blamed all tangled and hasty living, and forbade us as girls destined to be the companions of highly educated men ever to bustle or behave as though life held a whip over us. 'Being is worth little in a fly,' she would insist; but when it creates heroical fortitude, beauty in movement and disposition, and profoundly harmonious attachments . . ." and here Dione looked towards Parrhasios till he continued for her, "and creates, I suppose, also the masterpieces of sculpture, painting, poetry and music." "Yes," she laughed, "approach to all such things for her gave living its value. Their creation and preservation might even be worth the loss of life, was what I had meant to say. To lose them for mere maintenance she stigmatised as a base preference of means to ends." Socrates nodded and deduced, "Then we not only look to others for confirmation of the best truth about ourselves, but may expect to find in them as well vestiges of perfection"; and he turned to Kallias: "In that case not hopelessly does the victim argue with the tyrant's heart of stone. Nay, history shows us conquerors beseeching the conquered for approval. May not the wretched Andokides at this moment pine for Smikros' condolence and forgiveness?" Parrhasios here draped the thought to his fancy. "Though we deal with men, we look past them at the gods; which gives us courage to continue in spite of many disappointments"; and his young friend added: "Men who lived without confusion and remembered completely would be gods." Whereon

the philosopher resumed : " Then the kindly are not absurd when they believe that there is something quick behind the stony mask and Smikros in his resentment obeyed a just impulse though his action was violent and clumsy. The tendency of cunning men to impute deep designs to simple souls may be a mere distortion of this power of gazing over man's head at the gods."

" And Homer " cried Aristocles, " when he shows Pallas inspiring the thoughts and actions of Odysseus only interprets this deep instinct ; and thus also Apollo's perfect body renders the aspiration of health visible to adoring piety." Once more Socrates caught up the thread : " What if a mind peopled with divinities should be a condition of sanity ? Hence we feel it pious to reverence the gods, and sagacious to suppose them more complex, more manlike than the excellences that they embody. A naked notion or a mere name cannot address the mind with smiles as the young Eos does : her divinity is the image of an awe gleefully poised on the change from night to day. When the impulses within us behave like a mob, or like satyrs, that is because they reflect our tangled and confused behaviour ; fortunately at other times they are sisters, like the Muses, moving in choir and each in turn taking and yielding the lead. And (looking round with a smile) since you are all so docile to them, it is fitting that I, who may seem to have slighted them, invoke their aid.

O, delicate daughters of Memory, with your cool hands, pity and soothe the furrowed brow of an old man. Convey back into my turbid thoughts the vigour and passion of that hymn which Diotima of

Mantineia was wont to croon whenever silence grew long between some companion and herself . . . a thing which often happened," he went on, adapting his address to present company once more, "for every man felt bound to give her his best. I had heard it many times before I asked what the words were. She replied: 'Socrates, have you ever gone hot at a mere thought?' I nodded. 'Some purpose too lofty or too base for the gamut of your character, the mere notion of which passed like a flame through the tissues of your body?' I accepted her description. 'And that momentary heat left you surprised at your distinctness; as though you were habitually of a piece with human intentions, conceiving all readily, rejecting these, adopting those with unconcern, whereas this one cut you away from the past and lifted you out of your accustomed place, to separate you in the universe?' I nodded once more. 'Then,' said she, 'you have already experienced the favour of the perfectly candid goddess. Those verses are what the Orphic priests call a "perfume," because they are intended for recitation while herbs and spices burn in the rite. They should accompany an incense of invocation, and are rarely used nowadays since men deprecate the approach and would avert the advance of that goddess; so few have knowledge of her gracious benefits, whereas all dread her terrible insight.

Invisible Nemesis, peer and  
Sister of Aphrodite,  
Fire and invade  
This riotous heart, and fusing  
All base reluctance, free from

Dross mine intent.  
Then shape and use me fear-rid,  
Malleable and cleansed from malice.  
Quiver and throb  
Through me to-day, and not after  
Mad deed and stubborn blunder  
Shall prompt thee consume  
Along with botch and taint one  
Who, self-aware, reveres now  
Thy bodiless beauty.' "

Aristocles sighed, " But what a strange notion !  
Is this the dreaded Nemesis ? " and the old man  
replied : " Your wonder is the twin of my own,  
to allay which that wise woman asserted that  
in the days of Uranos, who, we are told, flourished  
as much prior to Chronos as he to Zeus, no form  
was yet distinct, but vapour and dust were dis-  
tracted by storms and winds that as suddenly  
resumed their violence as they forgot it. Yet  
the primal god became amorous ; this, we know  
from his successors, is as commonly the case with  
daimons as with men. Now his watery disposition  
hesitated between two goddesses. The one  
promised him definite limbs and precise sensa-  
tion. She would divide pleasure from pain,  
beauty from hideousness, light from darkness,  
fact from thought, love from hate. She appeared  
to him as this world appears to us on an early  
summer morning, and as a young woman in per-  
fect health appears to a young man. But the  
other said : ' Yes, she is clear and real and  
beautiful, but change she must ; age must alter-  
nate with her youth, disease with her health,  
winter with her summer ' ; and as the words  
reached him he saw a palsied crone lashed by a



blizzard stumbling through snow under dreary clouds. But that pure voice ran on : ' My beauty is unalterable and creates a permanent ecstasy ; and hers is but a part of its perfection present as a supremely vivid memory, but intangible,—a vision not a scene, a portrait not a person. You shall forget this confusion and insufferable hesitancy that afflicts you, and, avoiding her treacherous solidity, grow holy, just and lovely as I am.' Like a mere man he could not choose, but gave vows to the bodiless Nemesis, and dallied none the less with the fair, substantial Ge ; who, great by his sovereignty, teemed innumerable gods, creatures and objects, till an universe much such as we see surrounded the distracted Uranos with its appealing charms, its counterclaims and appalling catastrophes. He knew neither rest nor sleep, and at last, abstracting himself, sought refuge with his immaterial spouse, who by disdaining his licentious desires had forced upon him those brittle vows of fidelity. And she, though wronged and incensed, accepted that fertile sovereignty which had hitherto been abused by her too fecund rival. Then she brought forth consistency and disinterested intelligence, and, later, the ineffable delicacies of intuition, divination and perception, powers as bodiless as herself, but with a beauty as incapable of accepting defeat. Their inspiring swiftness, like breaths from great winnowing fans, commences to sift and re-sift the material jumble, proving its solidity light as chaff."

There was a stir as the philosopher paused, and Parrhasios, like a somnambulist, took a step toward him ; then he blushed, caressed his peaked black beard, and finally said : " Socrates, you



forget the explanation which you gave of Pericles' success : the skilled hand that taught the head caution. Now you hold form cheap : any shapeless abortion might harbour an invisible perfection."

The philosopher nodded gravely, then continued : " The heart of man, seduced by his five senses, can hardly ever spare attention to purity of purpose and those limpid sequences of reason which flow past him as a stream by an heron whose whole mind is given to frogs. Yet single-hearted effort and crystal-clear consideration are children of Nemesis and demand his whole soul, but obtain how much less ! And now, Parrhasios, does not a work of art last longer than the man who made it ? Reaching those whom he could never meet, it influences impulses he could neither have conceived nor have swayed ; it appeals straight to the invisible, intangible soul. These are signs that Nemesis works through it and that she has more than half rescued it from Ge, who destroys as fast as she brings forth, and will treat no one thing as more admirable than any other. The artist fails because such work suggests to him its apogee and then flaws and falls short, so that he turns towards the next in hopes to seize the intangible there ; and thus admiration leads him on from creation to creation, as though he followed beauty from hill-top to summit and from the highest peak saw her step on to a cloud. Yet this Aphrodite whom he follows is the twin-sister of her who loiters among flowers or lolls along the wave and is content, though that mundane creature mock us as strangely as trees that hang top-downwards in a

lake. The true plant, as we know, has grown upwards with patient fortitude in spite of storm and winter. The water lies to us ; so does this world, that seems to have no direction or a perverse one. Yet here or there through a man, or through his work, the heavenly Aphrodite convinces us of the reality of worth, startlingly immune, where all else is destined fuel for that flame of change which licks up the children of Ge. Thus shame and ardour, invisible hammers in the smithy of the heart, forge intentions to surpass all visible things. And these dies stamp a new value on stone and panel, or affix to parchment a seal worth far more than its weight in gold. And, added one to another, such enhanced objects may at last pile a stairway to the immaterial reality. But the mature artist must then turn his back on Ge and, like our Plato's blind poet, treasuring a vivid memory of her beauty, set his heart on the unattainable Nemesis."

A deep silence ensued. Except for Smikros and Dione, who had regained one of the couches, all were still standing in the vast twilit room from which the birds had gradually retreated, save for one quail nested on the lady's arm ; even thus, little by little, all spice of pleasantry had ebbed from Socrates' tone, till he now stood like a fisherman watching from a headland for the shoal, so as to signal its whereabouts to the boats waiting with lowered sails in shore ; so ample seemed the distances which he had established between his and our souls that yet yearned hungrily for his words. But no shoal came in sight, and he remained silent and alert.

At length Parrhasios said : " Supper attends

you in the silver dining-hall," then turning to Smikros: "Olpis shall now take you to Eryx-machos with a message from me. He is the best physician in Athens and shall keep you with him as long as your hands can profit from his attentions." As the others sauntered out through the glooming portico I heard Aristocles say, "Was I not right to call Socrates as pious as our grandfathers? And yet they could not even have followed the drift of such discourse"—or something to that effect. But still the philosopher stood inviolable and alone, though the others frequently looked back to invite him to follow. Smikros was unswathed and led away with his splendid investiture rolled up under his arm and his head still crowned. Gryllus and the other slaves murmured with surprise at finding him, after all his good fortune, still as sullen as when he came; but I fancied that his unwillingness to speak had by this time a very different cause. The stillness and silence were perfect before Socrates was freed by his daimon; and he was making for the street with energetic decision, when light from the silver hall streamed across the court, and Aristocles, who must have been on the watch, waylaid him and drew him, in spite of some little reluctance, into that festive brightness, over the source of which a curtain swung to: and I heard and saw no more.

## V

An end is reached : the soul still yearns to peep,  
Trespass, and probe beyond. Aristocles  
Over me and my tablets some days later  
Stooped and refused my poor confusion licence  
To hide ill-ordered jottings. He has often  
Since climbed to where I sit, and from the sill,  
Between the folded shutters leaning out,  
Bathed both his thought and eyes where swallows  
swim—

With patience helping me to find some phrase,  
That like a raindrop on a thirsty leaf,  
Revives the very thought we half recall  
And makes it ours again. If ours, then yours,  
Whoever you may be who read this scroll  
And long to know what I am pleased you should,—  
How Smikros' hands, deformed, yet hold the plume  
And draw it with increasing mastery  
Athwart the smooth-curved clay, even as words  
Follow my thought more deftly. We both owe  
The intent tremors of our absorbed hours  
To those rich patrons of our damaged lives  
Parrhasios and Aristocles, men like gods  
Whom our glad hearts can never thank enough.

## POSTSCRIPT

The fleet is captured, three times fifty ships !  
Aristocles and Socrates both think  
Athens will be besieged.  
To them, Parrhasios and Dione, I  
Was after supper to have read this scroll.  
But now the chance can scarcely come again.



This news has scattered them and tossed the  
thought

Of me and what I write as high wind will  
A single noteless leaf.

After the first  
Exclamatory conference had lulled  
“ We now face Nemesis ! ” the poet groaned,  
“ What man sees help in her ? ” Lifting his head  
Socrates clasped the challenge like a hand  
Stretched by a drowning man toward the sky :  
“ The thing that happens, though it disappoint  
Our every hope, is priceless—all we have ;  
And if we study it will prove enough.”  
—“ Enough for what ? Enough to save this town  
From the victorious Lacedaemonian lords,  
Their senses hard from years of narrow training  
Meant to forge men like weapons of offence ? ”  
The old man answered “ Do you think, my boy,  
If even an hundred men met this disaster  
Like eager scholars, that they could not build  
A finer Athens, though this be sacked and burnt ?  
The city where we dwell is in our minds  
If we have minds worthy a town like this.”  
Aristocles was cloaked ; he stooped and kissed  
That furrowed forehead like a sacred thing  
Instantly, while it bowed to re-approve  
Those words with thought. Moth-like his lips lit  
there

And he was flown in quest of means to fetch  
His parents from Ægina, now left quite  
Without defence. Parrhasios followed him  
To learn what captain still might dare to ship  
Him and his goods from our hospitable land.  
Dione glid within. First Socrates  
Gazed round, then quit the house with everyday



Demeanour like himself : the lamps burned on :  
The street grew hoarse with shouting : no one  
slept.

Though now the sun has brought the daylight back  
Nothing can ever be the same again.

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